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Report to the Committee on Armed  
Services, U.S. Senate and the  
Committee on Armed Services,  
House of Representatives

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May 2008

# MILITARY READINESS

## Joint Policy Needed to Better Manage the Training and Use of Certain Forces to Meet Operational Demands



G A O

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## Why GAO Did This Study

Military operations in support of the Global War on Terrorism, particularly those in Iraq and Afghanistan, have challenged the Department of Defense's (DOD) ability to provide needed ground forces. Section 354 of the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act directed GAO to report on a number of military readiness issues. In this report, GAO addresses (1) the extent to which DOD's use of nonstandard forces to meet ground force requirements has impacted the force and (2) the extent to which DOD has faced challenges in managing the training and use of these forces, and taken steps to address any challenges. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed DOD policies, guidance, and data and interviewed department, joint, combatant command, and service officials as well as trainers and over 300 deploying, deployed, and redeploying servicemembers.

## What GAO Recommends

To better manage the training and use of nonstandard forces, GAO recommends that DOD develop and issue a policy, which clarifies: responsibilities for the training of all nonstandard forces, including individual augmentees; training waiver responsibilities and procedures; and the nature and extent of ground force commanders' authorities to direct the use of nonstandard forces. DOD concurred with this recommendation and stated it has work underway to review existing policy and to ensure necessary guidance is in place.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-670](#). For more information, contact Sharon L. Pickup at (202) 512-9619 or [pickups@gao.gov](mailto:pickups@gao.gov).

## MILITARY READINESS

### Joint Policy Needed to Better Manage the Training and Use of Certain Forces to Meet Operational Demands

#### What GAO Found

The use of nonstandard forces—individuals in certain temporary positions, and units with missions that require the unit personnel to learn new skills or operate in different environments—has helped DOD fulfill U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) requirements that the Army otherwise would not have been able to fill, but these efforts have also caused challenges across the force. For certain Navy and Air Force occupational specialties, these nonstandard force deployments have challenged the services' abilities to (1) balance the amount of time their forces are deployed with the amount of time they spend at home, and (2) meet other standard mission requirements. Some of the communities that have been most affected by nonstandard force deployments include the engineering, security force, and explosive ordnance disposal communities. In addition, the services have been challenged by emerging requirements for capabilities which do not exist in any of the services' standard forces, such as the transition teams that train local forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. These requirements are particularly taxing because the teams are composed primarily of officers and senior noncommissioned officers. Because standard forces do not exist to meet these leadership requirements, the services are forced to take leaders from other commands, which must then perform their missions without a full complement of leaders.

The steps that DOD has taken to increase coordination between the services and CENTCOM have helped DOD manage challenges related to nonstandard forces, but additional steps are needed to ensure consistency in training and using these forces. Nonstandard forces face more complex relationships than standard forces, making coordination of their training and use more challenging. Specifically, their training requirements are established by both the services and theater commanders and training may be conducted by trainers from another service. In addition, while deployed, these forces often report to commanders from two different services. Furthermore, authorities concerning the training and use of forces do not specifically address the training and use of nonstandard forces. DOD has taken significant steps to coordinate the training of its nonstandard forces through regular conferences at which CENTCOM and service officials develop detailed training plans for some nonstandard forces. However, the training of individual augmentees has not been fully coordinated. As a result, individuals who perform the same types of tasks may receive different levels of training. Also, the services waive training requirements without consistently coordinating with CENTCOM, so CENTCOM lacks full visibility over the extent to which all of its forces have met requirements. To increase support and oversight of the use of nonstandard forces in theater, the services have taken steps to improve coordination, which have reduced instances where nonstandard forces' missions, tasks, or organization are modified. However, the services do not have full visibility over their nonstandard forces and view the authority of ground force commanders differently, which has sometimes led to differences in their use of nonstandard forces.

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# Contents

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<b>Letter</b>		<b>1</b>
	Results in Brief	3
	Background	5
	The Use of Nonstandard Forces Has Helped DOD to Meet CENTCOM Requirements but Has Also Created New Challenges	9
	Increased Coordination Has Helped DOD Address Some Challenges Related to the Training and Use of Nonstandard Forces, but Other Challenges Still Remain	14
	Conclusions	21
	Recommendation for Executive Action	22
	Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	22
<b>Appendix I</b>	<b>Scope and Methodology</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendix II</b>	<b>Comments from the Department of Defense</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Appendix III</b>	<b>Military Command and Control Relationships</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix IV</b>	<b>Training Requirements for Nonstandard Forces Deploying to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendix V</b>	<b>Servicemembers' Perceptions of Preparation for Nonstandard Force Deployments</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix VI</b>	<b>GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Related GAO Products</b>		<b>35</b>

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## Abbreviations

CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
DOD	Department of Defense
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
HMMWV	High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
SEAL	Sea, Air, Land

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United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

May 30, 2008

The Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman  
The Honorable John McCain  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate

The Honorable Ike Skelton  
Chairman  
The Honorable Duncan L. Hunter  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

Since 2001, over a million U.S. Army and Marine Corps servicemembers have been deployed abroad for military operations in support of the Global War on Terrorism, and the demands of current operations, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, have challenged the ability of the Army and Marine Corps to provide needed ground forces. In response to the high demand for ground forces and the high operations tempos of Army and Marine Corps forces, the Department of Defense (DOD) has taken steps to broaden the pool from which it can draw forces. Specifically, DOD has helped to mitigate the demands on the Army by deploying personnel from the Navy and the Air Force, and it has deployed personnel from all four services to meet emerging demands for leaders.

In this report, we distinguish between “standard forces” and “nonstandard forces.” Standard forces perform their core missions within service deployment constructs, such as Army brigades or Marine Corps regiments. Nonstandard forces refer to a broad range of forces that are currently being used to augment DOD’s standard forces and meet ongoing demands, primarily in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of operations. Specifically, we use the term nonstandard forces to include four different groups of forces that DOD has categorized as follows:

- **Joint sourced forces**—units from one service that are deployed to perform their core missions in place of units from another service; for example, Navy or Air Force medical units deployed to fill requirements for Army medical units.

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- **In-lieu-of forces**—units trained and deployed to execute missions outside of their core competencies; for example, Army artillery units that are trained and then deployed to fill requirements for military police units.
  - **Ad-hoc forces**—temporary units formed by consolidating individuals and equipment from various commands or services and then training these personnel to meet mission requirements; for example, the transition teams that are currently training Iraqi and Afghan forces.
  - **Individual augmentees**—individuals deployed for temporary positions that augment staff operations during contingencies; for example, individuals deployed to fill temporary positions in the Multinational Force-Iraq joint headquarters.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2008<sup>1</sup> modified the Comptroller General's requirements for reporting on the readiness of Army and Marine Corps ground forces outlined in the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007.<sup>2</sup> In response to these requirements, we are issuing a series of products on readiness issues; a list is included at the end of this report. This report addresses DOD's efforts to mitigate the impact of high operational tempos specifically, assessing (1) the extent to which DOD's use of nonstandard forces to meet ground force requirements has impacted the force, and (2) the extent to which DOD has faced challenges in managing the training and use of these forces, and taken steps to address any challenges.

To assess the extent to which DOD's use of nonstandard forces has impacted the force, we analyzed documents provided by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Staff, U.S. Joint Forces Command, and the services, and we discussed the impacts of using nonstandard forces with officials from these organizations and with individual servicemembers. To assess the extent to which DOD has faced challenges in managing the training and use of these forces, and taken steps to address any challenges, we reviewed and analyzed portions of the United States Code that deal with service and combatant command responsibilities for preparing their forces, as well as OSD, Joint Staff, combatant command, and service policies and guidance. We also interviewed department, joint, combatant command, and service officials as well as trainers and individual servicemembers. Specifically, we

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<sup>1</sup>Pub. L. No. 110-181, §354 (2008).

<sup>2</sup>Pub. L. No. 109-364, §345 (2006).

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traveled to the CENTCOM area of operations in November 2007 and conducted group discussions with over 300 servicemembers who had deployed to CENTCOM for nonstandard force missions. Each servicemember also completed a questionnaire at the end of the discussion group sessions. Most of these personnel were Air Force servicemembers who were completing their deployments and in the process of redeploying from Iraq to the United States through Kuwait, but we also interviewed redeploying Navy and Army personnel. Many of the servicemembers we met with had performed engineering, detainee operations, or convoy missions, which are among the largest nonstandard missions in Iraq. We also interviewed officials from the commands that oversee the deployment of nonstandard forces in the CENTCOM area of operations as well as officials responsible for the oversight of personnel from specific specialties, such as explosive ordnance disposal. Additional information about our scope and methodology can be found in appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2007 through April 2008, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Results in Brief

DOD has used Navy and Air Force personnel to fill some CENTCOM force requirements that would otherwise have exceeded the Army's capacity to supply personnel and it has also deployed individuals to meet new demands for leaders, but these efforts have created other challenges for the services. By deploying nonstandard forces in addition to its standard forces, DOD has spread the CENTCOM requirements for ongoing operations across a wider portion of the force, but available data indicate that nonstandard forces represent a small portion of the total deployed force. While deployments of Navy and Air Force nonstandard forces have helped to mitigate the high demands for Army forces, some requirements, such as those for explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and medical personnel, can be met only by a small number of highly skilled individuals from among the services. Other requirements, such as those for military police, have been met with a larger group of nonstandard forces. Although the use of nonstandard forces has helped DOD fill CENTCOM requirements that the Army otherwise would not have been able to fill, it has also challenged the Navy's and the Air Force's abilities to balance the amount of time their forces are deployed with the amount of time they



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spend at home, as well as their abilities to meet other mission requirements. Despite these challenges, the Navy and the Air Force have stated that they can sustain the current level of nonstandard force contributions in support of ongoing operations, but not without causing strain on the force. In addition, over the course of ongoing operations, requirements have emerged for new capabilities that do not reside in any of the services' force structures. Requirements for individual augmentees and the transition teams that train local forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are the most common examples of these emerging requirements. Both sets of requirements are focused on leaders—primarily officers and middle- to senior-grade noncommissioned officers. This demand for leaders has created challenges for the services because the leaders are generally pulled from other units or commands, which are left to perform their missions without their full complement of leaders. The demand also increases deployment rates for the individual leaders who fill the positions.

The steps that DOD has taken to increase coordination between the services and CENTCOM—or its ground force commanders—have helped DOD manage challenges related to nonstandard forces, but additional steps are needed to ensure consistency in the training and use of these forces. Nonstandard forces face more complex relationships than standard forces, making coordination of their training and use more challenging. Specifically, their training requirements are established by both the services and commanders in theater and much of their training may be conducted by trainers from another service. In addition, while they are deployed, these forces often report to commanders from two different services. Furthermore, joint doctrine concerning the training and use of forces does not specifically address the training and use of nonstandard forces, with their complex training and command relationships. DOD has taken significant steps to coordinate the training of its nonstandard forces through regular conferences at which CENTCOM, U.S. Joint Forces Command, and service officials develop detailed training plans for some nonstandard forces. However, the training of individual augmentees has not been fully coordinated; as a result, individuals who perform the same types of tasks in theater may receive different levels of training. Also, the services waive some training requirements without consistently coordinating with CENTCOM, so CENTCOM lacks full visibility over the extent to which all of its assigned forces have met its training requirements. To increase support and oversight of the use of nonstandard forces in theater, the services since 2004 have taken steps to improve coordination with the ground force commanders who provide the day-to-day taskings for these forces. Air Force commanders said that the

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increased coordination with ground force commanders has reduced the number of instances in which ground force commanders have modified the missions, tasks, or organization of Air Force nonstandard forces, and the Navy's similar coordination efforts have allowed it to more easily limit the extent to which its nonstandard forces perform tasks for which they have not been fully trained and equipped. Despite these coordination efforts, we noted that the Navy and the Air Force do not always have full visibility over commanders' use of nonstandard forces in theater, and have differing views on the authority of ground force commanders, which has sometimes led to differences in the use of nonstandard forces.

To better manage the training and use of nonstandard forces, we are recommending that the Secretary of Defense direct the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to develop and issue a policy to guide the training and use of nonstandard forces. At a minimum, the policy should clarify: responsibilities for the training of all nonstandard forces, including individual augmentees; training waiver responsibilities and procedures; and the nature and extent of ground force commanders' authorities to direct the use of nonstandard forces. In its comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with our recommendation and stated it has work underway to review existing policy and ensure that guidance is in place for effective training and equipping of nonstandard forces and individual augmentees. In addition, DOD provided technical comments, which we have incorporated in the report as appropriate. DOD's comments are reprinted in their entirety in appendix II.

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## Background

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### Military Roles and Responsibilities

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the top military advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the President and has many responsibilities, which include the development of a number of overarching military plans and policies. The Chairman has set forth doctrine that addresses command relationships and authorities, principles for command and control, guidance for organizing joint forces and other selected joint activities in Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, and provides further detail on such issues as they relate to joint land

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operations in Joint Publication 3-31, *Command and Control for Joint Land Operations*.<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. military's global presence is organized into a series of geographic combatant commands. The commander of each combatant command has authority over assigned U.S. military forces operating within that command's area of operations and is directly responsible for planning and conducting the operations that achieve national, alliance, or coalition strategic objectives based on directives that flow from the President and the Secretary of Defense. Combatant commanders may exercise this authority through subordinate joint force commanders. The commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) has authority to direct all aspects of military operations in the command's area of responsibility. Joint force commanders under CENTCOM are responsible for conducting region-specific operations, such as Operations Iraqi Freedom in Iraq and Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. For example, in Iraq, the commander of Multinational Force-Iraq—a CENTCOM joint force commander—provides direction to the commander of Multinational Corps-Iraq, who in turn directs the joint force commanders responsible for particular regions within Iraq. Regional commanders in Iraq control the brigade-sized units operating in their areas. Army brigade combat teams or Marine Corps regimental combat teams are led by experienced officers who generally have broad responsibilities for conducting missions with their assigned forces. When these ground force commanders are directing standard forces from their own services, they are responsible not only for directing the day-to-day movements of these forces, but also for organizing them and determining the scope of their missions within the parameters set by higher command authority. When ground force commanders control forces from more than one service, joint doctrine requires that they synchronize the unique capabilities and limitations of each force in order to achieve unity of effort.<sup>4</sup>

Combatant commanders and service secretaries have responsibilities related to ensuring the preparedness of forces that are assigned to the combatant commands. Under Title 10 of the U.S. Code,<sup>5</sup> the commander of

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<sup>3</sup>Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (May 14, 2007) and Joint Publication 3-31, *Command and Control for Joint Land Operations* (Mar. 23, 2004).

<sup>4</sup>Joint Publication 3-31, *Command and Control for Joint Land Operations* (Mar. 23, 2004).

<sup>5</sup>See 10 U.S.C. §164 for responsibilities of commanders of combatant commands, and 10 U.S.C. §§3013, 5013, and 8013 for the responsibilities of the service secretaries.

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a combatant command is directly responsible for the preparedness of the command to carry out assigned missions and each service secretary is responsible for training and carrying out the functions of the service so as to fulfill the current and future operational requirements of the combatant commands. For example, when the Army provides standard forces to a combatant command such as CENTCOM, it takes steps to ensure that these forces meet Army training requirements and certifies that these requirements have been completed before deploying its servicemembers. In addition, these forces generally are commanded in theater by a subordinate commander from their own service. Because section 164 of Title 10 of the United States Code also gives combatant commanders wide-reaching authority over their assigned forces—including the authority to coordinate joint training—CENTCOM and its ground component command have issued lists of required training tasks that apply to forces deploying to the CENTCOM area of operations. Coordination of service and combatant commander responsibilities and training requirements is generally straightforward and simple when it involves standard forces because standard forces are normally trained by their parent service and then directed in theater by commanders from the same service, who organize them, determine the scope of their missions, and direct their the day-to-day movements.

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## Meeting Requirements with Nonstandard Forces

Combatant commands like CENTCOM state their need for forces using various requirements documents, such as Requests for Forces and Joint Manning Documents. The joint and service force providers are responsible for identifying forces available to meet these combatant command requirements. The force providers have used two types of forces to meet CENTCOM requirements—standard forces and nonstandard forces. Standard forces perform their core missions within service deployment constructs.<sup>6</sup> Ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have required large numbers of ground forces, including requirements for certain combat support and combat service support skills. Engineering, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), and detainee operations personnel have been in particularly high demand. As the Army and Marine Corps standard forces that were filling these CENTCOM requirements began to approach or exceed DOD's deployment rotation goals, DOD looked to nonstandard

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<sup>6</sup>The Army typically deploys brigades; the Navy, carrier or amphibious assault groups; the Air Force, air expeditionary force wings; and the Marine Corps, regiments or marine expeditionary units.

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forces as a way to help meet the large CENTCOM requirements. DOD has relied on the following nonstandard forces.

- **Joint sourced forces:** These are forces from one service deployed to perform their core missions in place of units from another service. An example would be a Navy Mobile Construction Battalion filling an Army combat heavy engineer requirement.
- **In-lieu-of forces:** These are forces trained and deployed to execute missions outside of their core competencies. An example would be taking an existing Army artillery battalion, providing it with training and equipment, and deploying it to fill a transportation or military police requirement.
- **Ad-hoc forces:** These are temporary forces formed by consolidating individuals and equipment from various commands or services and then training the personnel to meet mission requirements. The most common ad-hoc units are the transition teams that are training Iraqi and Afghan forces.
- **Individual augmentees:** These are individuals deployed for temporary positions that augment staff operations during contingencies. An example would be individuals deployed to fill temporary positions in the Multinational Force-Iraq joint headquarters.

We have previously testified that in order to meet the challenges of ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, DOD has taken steps to increase the availability of personnel for deploying units.<sup>7</sup> However, in the process, the services have been unable to meet DOD's deployed/at home ratio goals, for some personnel. DOD's goal is for active component personnel to be at home twice as long as they are deployed. However, many forces, especially those in high demand, are experiencing deployed/at home ratios of 1:2 or less. These goals have been especially challenging for the Army, which has successively increased the length of its Iraq deployments—from 6 to 12 and eventually to 15 months. For reserve component personnel, DOD has set a goal to limit involuntary mobilizations to 12 months, with 5 years between involuntary mobilizations. However, when he issued these goals in a January 2007 memorandum,<sup>8</sup> the Secretary of Defense noted that in the short term, DOD will not be able to meet the goals.

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<sup>7</sup>GAO, *Military Readiness: Impact of Current Operations and Actions Needed to Rebuild Readiness of U.S. Ground Forces*. [GAO-08-497T](#) (Washington D.C.: Feb. 14, 2008).

<sup>8</sup>Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Utilization of the Total Force* (Jan. 19, 2007).

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## The Use of Nonstandard Forces Has Helped DOD to Meet CENTCOM Requirements but Has Also Created New Challenges

While DOD's limited use of nonstandard forces has spread large CENTCOM requirements across a wider portion of the force, the use of nonstandard forces has not alleviated the high pace of operations among Army forces and it has created several new challenges for the services. Specifically, it has exacerbated the high pace of operations for selected Navy and Air Force occupational specialties. In addition, nonstandard force requirements for individual leaders have created challenges for the services because the leaders are generally pulled from other units or commands, which are left to perform their missions without their full complement of leaders. The demands also increase deployment rates for the individual leaders who fill the positions.

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## Use of Nonstandard Forces Spreads Requirements Across More of the Force, but Available Data Indicate That Nonstandard Forces Represent a Small Portion of the Deployed Force

By deploying nonstandard forces in addition to its standard forces, DOD has spread the CENTCOM requirements for ongoing operations across a wider portion of the force, but available data indicate that nonstandard forces represent a small portion of the deployed force. Navy and Air Force officials provided us with historical data which indicate that the use of their nonstandard forces has been increasing since 2004. The figures show that the two services together deployed at least 17,000 nonstandard forces between mid-2006 and early 2008—a relatively small number compared to an average deployed force of about 180,000 in Iraq and Afghanistan during a similar time period.<sup>9</sup> According to Army, Marine Corps, and U.S. Joint Forces Command officials, Army and Marine Corps nonstandard forces also constitute a relatively small portion of the deployed force. However, unclassified figures on the number of deployed Army and Marine Corps nonstandard forces are not available.

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## DOD Has Used Nonstandard Forces to Meet CENTCOM's Large Requirements

DOD's use of nonstandard forces has helped to increase the supply of certain forces, but the Army has continued to deploy its forces at higher than desired rates due to imbalances that still exist between the available supply and current demand for forces. DOD's rotation goal calls for active component forces to spend at least twice as much time at home as deployed. Therefore, if the services are to meet this goal, the supply of

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<sup>9</sup>Because the services did not collect data for similar time periods, we included Navy nonstandard force requirements for fiscal year 2007 and Air Force nonstandard force requirements from March 2006 through March 2008. We also included individual augmentees deployed as of August 2007. In addition, the deployed force in Iraq and Afghanistan represents an average of forces deployed from July 2007 through October 2007.

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deployable personnel must be at least three times the demand for those particular personnel—one person would be deployed and two would be at home. Because nonstandard forces make up a relatively small portion of the deployed force, the deployments of nonstandard forces have generally had a limited impact on the supply of forces relative to the demand for those forces. As a result, officials reported that the Army has continued to deploy its personnel at rates in excess of DOD's deployment goals.

Two factors can affect the supply of personnel, including nonstandard forces, which are available to meet CENTCOM's large demands. The demand for some occupational specialties—such as medical or EOD personnel—can only be met by a small, highly skilled group of personnel who generally have undergone extensive individual or unit training to prepare them for their missions. For example, CENTCOM has increasing demands for EOD personnel to locate, identify, and dispose of various forms of explosive ordnance, but the services have limited numbers of EOD personnel who have completed the training necessary to perform these tasks. The Navy has about 2,200 deployable EOD personnel.<sup>10</sup> These individuals are required to complete 54 weeks of training, which includes parachuting and diving, in addition to basic EOD training. Similarly, the Air Force has only about 1,000 qualified EOD personnel. Deployments of personnel from these relatively small Navy and Air Force EOD communities have helped DOD fulfill CENTCOM requirements that the Army otherwise would have been unable to fill. However, due to the CENTCOM demands for EOD personnel, Army EOD personnel will continue to face deployments at a pace above DOD's 1:2 deployed/at home goal, typically deploying for 15 months and returning home for only 12 months.

The different service approaches for filling requirements can also affect the supply of personnel, including nonstandard forces, which are available to meet CENTCOM's large demands. For example, the Army and the Navy approaches for fulfilling CENTCOM's military police requirements have increased the supply of available personnel more than the Air Force approach for meeting these requirements.<sup>11</sup> Since the early phases of operations in Iraq, the Army increased the supply of personnel it had

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<sup>10</sup>This number includes sailors from deployable EOD mobile units only. The Navy also has additional EOD personnel assigned to shore duty who are not deployable.

<sup>11</sup>These requirements are for detainee operations, law and order, and base security missions.

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available to meet military police requirements by retraining units which were not in high demand, such as artillery and quartermaster units, and then deploying them in addition to its military police units. The Navy has also increased the supply of personnel available to meet these requirements by drawing personnel both from its Master-at-Arms specialty, which most closely resembles the Army's military police occupation, and from a broad range of specialties that were not police-related. The Navy adopted this approach because all of its nonstandard forces undergo mission-specific training prior to deploying. The Air Force approach did less to increase the supply of available personnel because it fulfilled these requirements exclusively with personnel from its relatively small security force occupational specialty. Because the Air Force used only a small portion of its force to meet these requirements, it did little to address the imbalance between CENTCOM's large demand for military police forces and the available supply of forces. As a result, not only are Army forces continuing to deploy at higher than desired rates, but the Air Force's security personnel are also deploying at high rates.

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### Nonstandard Force Deployments Increase Challenges for Some Portions of the Navy and the Air Force

Nonstandard force deployments have made it more difficult for the Air Force and the Navy to limit the high pace of operations in some occupational communities and they have created new challenges as the services have fewer personnel available to fulfill the standard missions of these communities. For example, the impact of nonstandard force deployments on the Air Force's security forces has been significant. These forces had a high tempo of operations before they began deploying for nonstandard force missions, and about half of the Air Force's 8,000 security forces who deployed in 2007 served as nonstandard forces. The length of these nonstandard force deployments varied between 6 and 12 months, but these forces generally had a 1:1 deployed/at home ratio, far below the DOD 1:2 goal. In addition, predeployment training requirements and standard mission requirements add significantly to the pace of operations for these security forces during their time at home. During our interviews with security force personnel who were redeploying from Iraq, many noted that they had been deployed to Iraq more than once and several servicemembers expressed the opinion that, given the full range of their responsibilities, they would be lucky to be home for 8 months of the year between deployments. Because Navy and Air Force personnel in some specialties, such as engineering, were experiencing high tempos even before they began deploying for nonstandard force missions, the services are finding it more difficult to limit the high tempo of operations for personnel in these occupational specialties. To help address these challenges, the services are expanding some of these stressed career



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fields. For example, the Navy is adding a mobile construction battalion to its force and the Air Force is adding heavy engineering personnel.<sup>12</sup> Air Force officials have also reported that nonstandard EOD deployments were intensifying already high personnel tempos for these forces and Navy data show that EOD personnel are away from their home stations for more than half the time that they are between nonstandard CENTCOM deployments.

The nonstandard force deployments of some occupational communities have also presented the services with additional challenges as fewer personnel are available to fulfill the standard missions of these communities. For example, the nonstandard force deployments of Navy and Air Force EOD personnel result in fewer personnel being available for standard EOD missions. As part of their standard mission, Navy EOD forces support U.S. Special Operations Command units, including Navy Sea, Air, Land (SEAL) units and Army Special Forces. They can also be called upon to counter weapons of mass destruction, clear harbors and waterways, and perform underwater repairs and salvage. Air Force officials have reported that nonstandard EOD deployments affect the service's ability to provide EOD teams in support of homeland missions such as deployments for major political events. The deployments of nonstandard Air Force security forces also result in fewer personnel being available for traditional mission requirements, such as ensuring the safety, security, reliability, and availability of nuclear weapons; providing flight line security; and providing home station security at Air Force bases.

Despite the challenges that they face as a result of nonstandard force deployments, Navy and Air Force officials have stated that the services will be able to sustain their current levels of nonstandard force deployments to meet CENTCOM requirements. However, they report that these deployments will cause strain on the force because many of the CENTCOM requirements are concentrated in specific occupational specialties.

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<sup>12</sup>These Air Force units are commonly referred to as RED HORSE units (Rapid Engineers Deployable Heavy Operations Repair Squadron Engineers).

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## CENTCOM's Demand for Leaders Has Created Challenges for Service Commands, Units, and Individuals

CENTCOM's extensive nonstandard force requirements for officers and middle- to senior-grade noncommissioned officers have challenged the commands or units responsible for fulfilling these requirements as well as the individual leaders who have deployed to fill the positions. Over the course of ongoing operations, requirements have emerged for new capabilities that do not reside in any of the services' force structures. Requirements for individual augmentees and the transition teams that train local forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are the most common examples of these emerging requirements. CENTCOM has thousands of positions for these nonstandard force leaders. These positions are being filled with personnel from all four services, but because the services do not have permanent transition team units or pools of available individuals, they generally transfer leaders from other commands or units to fill these positions. Personnel from service headquarter organizations are deploying to fill many of these leadership positions, but operational units are also being tasked by the services to give up some of their leaders. Officials reported that because the units and commands that deploy their key leaders generally do not receive replacement personnel, they face challenges as they are left to perform their own missions without their full complement of leaders. Both service and CENTCOM officials reported that the organizations which are giving up personnel face a difficult choice in deciding which of their leaders to keep and which of their leaders to deploy. The Navy recently began taking steps to relieve its commanders of having to make these difficult decisions. Under a new policy, the Navy will fill most individual augmentee positions with servicemembers who are between assignments, rather than pulling servicemembers from positions within other commands.<sup>13</sup> The stated purposes of this policy include providing stability for sailors and their families and improving manning stability at the unit level. As such, it mitigates the impact of individual augmentee deployments on Navy commands that were previously required to deploy some of their leaders.

CENTCOM's large demand for leaders has also created challenges for some of the leaders who have deployed to fill these CENTCOM requirements. Because transition teams are generally comprised of officers and middle- and senior-grade noncommissioned officers, and individual augmentees tend to come from similar leadership ranks, not from the large pool of junior enlisted personnel, leaders who are deploying to fill CENTCOM's nonstandard leadership positions may experience a

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<sup>13</sup>NAVADMIN 147/07, Global War on Terrorism Support Assignments (June 2007).

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high tempo of operations. Many of these leaders are being taken from commands when they are in the “at home” portion of their deployment cycles. As a result, they may be deployed in excess of DOD’s 1:2 deployed/at home goal for active forces, or DOD’s 1:5 goal for reserve component forces. Even the leaders who are deploying from defense agencies or headquarters organizations may have just left an operational unit, where they had recently deployed.

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## Increased Coordination Has Helped DOD Address Some Challenges Related to the Training and Use of Nonstandard Forces, but Other Challenges Still Remain

The steps that DOD has taken to increase coordination between the services and CENTCOM—or its ground force commanders—have helped DOD manage several challenges related to the training and use of its nonstandard forces, but other challenges still remain. Nonstandard forces face more complex training and command relationships than standard forces. Their training requirements are established by both the services and commanders in theater and much of their training may be conducted by trainers from another service. In addition, while they are deployed, these forces often report to commanders from two different services. DOD has taken significant steps to coordinate the training of its nonstandard forces through regular conferences at which CENTCOM, U.S. Joint Forces Command, and service officials develop detailed training plans for some nonstandard forces. However, the training of individual augmentees has not been fully coordinated; as a result, individuals who perform the same types of tasks in theater may receive different levels of training. Furthermore, the services waive some training requirements without consistently coordinating with CENTCOM, so CENTCOM lacks full visibility over the extent to which all of its assigned forces have met its training requirements. However, since 2004, the services have taken steps to increase oversight of nonstandard forces in theater, and enhanced coordination with the ground force commanders who provide the day-to-day taskings for these forces. Despite these coordination efforts, we noted that the Navy and the Air Force do not always have full visibility over commanders’ use of nonstandard forces in theater, and have differing views on the authority of ground force commanders, which has sometimes led to differences in the use of nonstandard forces.

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## DOD Faces Challenges in Managing Training and Use of Nonstandard Forces Due to Complex Command Relationships and Other Factors

DOD faces challenges in coordinating the training and use of nonstandard forces that it does not typically face with its standard forces because of differences in the provision of training and more complex command relationships. While standard forces may have one or more chains of command, standard forces are generally trained by their parent service to requirements set by that service and then directed in theater by commanders from the same service, who organize them, determine the scope of their missions, and direct their day-to-day movements. As a result, the coordination of the training and use of standard forces is generally straightforward.

In contrast, many nonstandard forces undergo training provided by another service and face more complicated command relationships, making coordination of their training and use more challenging. For example, because the Navy and the Air Force are unable to provide most of the ground combat skills training that their nonstandard forces require, the Army has agreed to provide ground combat skills training at Army locations such as Camp Shelby, Fort Bliss, and Fort Dix. The Army also provides Navy and Air Force nonstandard forces specialized training at Army Training and Doctrine Command locations. For example, it provides a military police investigator course at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

While some nonstandard forces are trained by their own services and report only to commanders from that same service, many nonstandard forces are trained by a different service and then report in theater to commanders from more than one service. For example, “in-lieu-of” Army artillery units may be trained by the Army to perform military police functions and then deployed to theater, where they would typically report to an Army commander who would determine their organization, the scope of their missions, and their day-to-day tasks. Other nonstandard forces, such as Navy forces performing detainee operations or Air Force units performing convoy missions, have more complicated relationships. While these Navy units typically receive Army training, these Air Force units receive Air Force training. However, both the Navy and the Air Force units typically face dual chains of command in theater. They typically receive their day-to-day taskings from an Army ground force commander but also report to commanders from their own services, who are responsible for determining their organization and the scope of their missions. For more information on command and control relationships in the CENTCOM area of operations, see appendix III.

Given these complex training and command relationships, roles and responsibilities must be clearly understood in order for the in-theater use

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of nonstandard forces to align with the training of those forces. However, joint doctrine concerning the training and use of forces—including command relationships, roles, and responsibilities—was established before DOD began expanding its use of nonstandard forces in 2004. Moreover, the latest version of the joint doctrine does not specifically address the training and use of nonstandard forces, with their complex training and command relationships. Lacking policies that specifically define roles and responsibilities for nonstandard forces, the services have increased their coordination to address these complex training and command relationships. While individual augmentees typically report to a single commander in theater, these nonstandard forces may also face challenges because their in-theater commanders may not be from the individual augmentee’s parent service and because the in-theater commanders may not be from the same service that trained the individual augmentee.

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### Commands and Services Have Taken Significant Steps to Coordinate Plans for Training Some Nonstandard Forces

CENTCOM and U.S. Joint Forces Command have taken steps to coordinate efforts to plan for the predeployment training that many nonstandard forces need, including participating in periodic conferences, referred to as Joint Sourced Training and Oversight conferences. At these meetings, officials from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, CENTCOM, and U.S. Joint Forces Command conduct line-by-line reviews of Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force nonstandard forces and determine which training the deploying service will provide and which training the Army will provide for the other services. To prepare for the Joint Sourced Training and Oversight conferences, the Air Force and the Navy take certain steps, including informally consulting with Army officials, as the following examples illustrate.

- The Air Force holds its own periodic conferences to determine the specific training needs of its nonstandard forces. During these conferences, officials from various Air Force training, headquarters, and theater-level commands and organizations evaluate the list of CENTCOM-required training tasks and determine what, if any, additional training nonstandard forces may require. To avoid unwanted duplication of training, they also determine whether any existing Air Force training can be used to meet CENTCOM’s requirements. Army officials attend these conferences to coordinate necessary training that the Air Force is not able to provide. However, CENTCOM headquarters officials responsible for developing the training requirements generally have not attended these conferences.

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- The Navy also reviews training requirements for its nonstandard forces and it conducts informal discussions with the Army prior to the Joint Sourced Training and Oversight conferences. During these discussions the Navy determines what additional training its nonstandard forces may require, but it does not attempt to substitute training that sailors already receive for CENTCOM's required training, and CENTCOM officials do not generally participate in these discussions.

As a result of these coordination efforts, officials we interviewed believe they have been able to gain a good understanding of CENTCOM and service training requirements for certain nonstandard forces and the types of training that will be provided to ensure these requirements are met. See appendix IV for more information on training requirements and types of training.

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## Individual Augmentee Training Has Not Been Fully Coordinated

While the Joint Sourced Training and Oversight conference participants coordinate training plans for most nonstandard forces, the participants do not address the training needs for one group of nonstandard forces—individual augmentees—during the conferences. Rather, each service conducts its own program of instruction, which vary in content and length, and which may involve training from other services. For example, the Army's specific program of instruction that deploying Army individual augmentees must attend is 7 days long. These augmentees must also complete additional Army-specific training, either before or after they attend the individual augmentee course. The Navy requires its individual augmentees to attend a 17-day combat training course, run by the Army at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Prior to December 2007, Air Force individual augmentees received no ground combat skills training. Since then, the Air Force has been sending its individual augmentees through one of three courses ranging in length from 5 to 10 days, which are based on internally developed Air Force requirements. In some cases, individual augmentees from one service have attended a different service's training course. For example, according to Army training officials, some Navy personnel—who were not subject to the additional Army training requirements—attended the Army's individual augmentee training, rather than the Navy course, because the Army course took less time to complete than the Navy course. Despite the differences in individual augmentee training, Army, Navy, and Air Force individual augmentees often serve side-by-side in theater and are expected to perform the same types of tasks.

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## CENTCOM Lacks Full Visibility over Services' Granting of Training Waivers

Under Title 10 of the United States Code and joint doctrine, the combatant commands and the service secretaries have responsibilities related to ensuring the preparedness of forces that are assigned to the combatant commands. In exercising these authorities, the services determine required training for their forces and have also established procedures for waiving training under certain circumstances. In addition, CENTCOM has established a list of certain "theater entry requirements" characterized as training tasks on which it expects deploying forces to train prior to deployment. See appendix IV for additional information on training requirements and types of training. While the services and CENTCOM have coordinated some training plans, the services have implemented procedures for waiving CENTCOM-required training without fully coordinating with the CENTCOM headquarters office responsible for developing the training requirements on either the development of the waiver procedures or the actual issuing of waivers. Navy nonstandard forces that have completed Navy combat skills training more than 90 days prior to their deployment would normally have to update their training by repeating the course, but they can waive this requirement if they complete relevant combat skills training that significantly exceeds what they would receive in the Navy course.<sup>14</sup> The Air Force grants waivers for combat skills training on a case-by-case basis. The Air Force headquarters operations office considers approval of combat skills training waivers for Air Force nonstandard forces if the commander who has day-to-day control over those forces accepts the risk of lost training and states in writing that the forces will not conduct missions outside of their operating bases. According to CENTCOM officials, the services have not consistently coordinated these waiver policies with CENTCOM. Therefore, CENTCOM does not have full visibility over the extent to which its assigned forces have met its established training requirements. Officials from both the Navy and the Air Force emphasized that they grant few training waivers, but they said that they do not track all nonstandard force training waivers.

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<sup>14</sup>NAVADMIN 355/07, Navy Individual Augmentee Combat Skills Training (Dec. 2007).

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Services Have Taken Steps to Coordinate More Closely with Ground Force Commanders, but Have Differing Views about the Ground Force Commanders' Authority to Use Nonstandard Forces

Since 2004, the services have expanded their efforts to provide oversight and support to their nonstandard forces, including coordinating with ground force commanders to ensure the forces are being used for missions and tasks for which they were trained. Specifically, the Navy increased the number of staff and the amount of resources it dedicates to supporting nonstandard forces in the CENTCOM theater. The Air Force also expanded its in-theater support of its nonstandard forces, and in 2007 it redesignated its Expeditionary Mission Support Groups as Air Expeditionary Groups in order to increase their level of authority. While the two services have in-theater support commands at several locations, the commanders and their support personnel are regularly in the field interacting with ground force commanders and nonstandard forces. Air Force and Navy officials from the in-theater commands said that expanding their support has led to increased coordination with ground force commanders. According to Air Force commanders, this coordination has reduced the number of instances in which ground force commanders have modified the missions, tasks, or organization of their nonstandard forces after they arrive in theater. Similarly, the Navy has enhanced its ability to coordinate the successful resolution of cases in which ground force commanders may require Navy nonstandard forces to perform tasks for which they have not been fully trained and equipped.

Despite these coordination efforts, we noted that the Navy and the Air Force do not always have full visibility over commanders' use of nonstandard forces in theater, and have differing views on the authority of ground force commanders, which has sometimes led to differences in the use of nonstandard forces. Because the services do not always have representatives from the supporting commands collocated with all of their nonstandard forces, they are not able to coordinate with ground force commanders concerning all changes to organization, mission, or tasks. For example, the service commands do not have visibility over their nonstandard force members who volunteer for additional tasks for which they may not be properly prepared. Navy officials estimate that there may be six cases per month in which volunteers from their nonstandard forces perform tasks for which they have not been fully trained. Because servicemembers do so without the knowledge of their Navy chain of command, the command officials were unable to precisely state the extent to which Navy nonstandard forces volunteered, and they had not directly observed the situations in which the servicemembers volunteered. Air Force commanders estimated that 95 percent of Air Force nonstandard



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forces in the CENTCOM area of operations were performing precisely the tasks for which they were trained, equipped, and deployed. However, they said a relatively small number of personnel were performing tasks or missions which differed from those on CENTCOM's requirements document, and added that in most cases these new tasks underutilized the skills of the nonstandard forces.

Divergent interpretations of assigned roles and responsibilities have also posed challenges as commanders have sought to use their nonstandard forces. For example, the services maintain that there are limitations on the ground force commanders' authority to modify the organization, missions, or tasks of deployed nonstandard forces. Specifically, the Air Force interprets CENTCOM's requirements documents strictly, and its Air Expeditionary Group commanders work with ground force commanders to try to prevent Air Force nonstandard forces from performing any missions or tasks that are not identified in CENTCOM's requirements documents. The Air Expeditionary Group commanders also seek to prevent CENTCOM or the ground force commanders from moving forces to locations that are not outlined in the original requirements. Air Force officials cite joint doctrine as justification for the Air Expeditionary Group commanders' ability to impose such limitations on ground force commanders. Conversely, CENTCOM officials told us they believe the ground force commanders' authority enables these commanders to move forces wherever they are needed. Many of the groups of redeploying airmen with whom we spoke felt that their Air Force chain of command was too involved in their daily activities; they stated that they could have performed their missions more effectively had they been allowed to work exclusively with their ground force commanders. Others were glad that their Air Force chain of command had intervened when the ground force commander had tried to adjust their missions. For more information on servicemembers' views on their nonstandard force deployments, see appendix V.

The Navy's interpretation of CENTCOM's requirements documents and joint doctrine is less strict than the Air Force's interpretation. Like the Air Expeditionary Groups, Navy officials coordinate with ground force commanders whenever that is possible. However, Navy commanders allow their nonstandard forces to perform additional tasks if (1) the ground force commander deems these additional tasks necessary to accomplish the mission and (2) the additional tasks do not put sailors at risk by

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requiring them to do something for which they are not trained and equipped. Based on these criteria, Navy officials told us that it is not unusual for their nonstandard forces to receive a change of mission or mission location. When we spoke to naval officers who had served in individual augmentee billets in Iraq and Afghanistan, they noted that their tasks were commonly modified or expanded, but they also said that the training they had received at the Navy's individual augmentee course had made them capable of performing all of their assigned tasks. In general, most of the nonstandard force servicemembers who reported that their tasks had changed while deployed indicated that the adjustments, such as moving units to different locations or performing additional duties, were minor. Although most of these tasks were performed in Iraq or Afghanistan, they did not necessarily expose the nonstandard forces to any additional danger. For example, a reserve intelligence officer told us that she was performing comptroller functions. In addition, leaders from one of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command task groups that support Navy nonstandard forces said that some petty officers were performing support functions, which were appropriate leadership duties for their rank, but which were not in line with the petty officers' occupational specialties or predeployment training. Running dining halls was one specific example.

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## Conclusions

To meet CENTCOM's requirements for servicemembers in certain high-demand specialties, the Navy and the Air Force have deployed nonstandard forces in place of Army personnel. Although the number of deployed nonstandard forces is small when compared with the total number of forces deployed to the CENTCOM area of operations, many nonstandard forces, like standard ground forces, have made repeated deployments and have had limited time at home between deployments. However, complex training and command relationships have presented nonstandard forces with challenges that standard forces do not typically face. Because existing authorities do not specifically outline roles and responsibilities for the training and use of nonstandard forces, CENTCOM and the services have sought to coordinate their efforts to ensure that nonstandard forces are properly trained and used in theater. While this coordination has increased significantly since 2004, DOD cannot currently ensure that all of its nonstandard forces are being used consistent with the tasks, conditions, and standards for which they have been trained because (1) CENTCOM does not have full visibility over training waivers, (2) individual augmentee training has not been coordinated, (3) service in-

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theater commands do not always have command personnel present with all their nonstandard forces, and (4) in some cases, even when coordination has occurred, divergent interpretations of existing authorities cause the services and CENTCOM or its ground force commanders to come to different conclusions concerning missions that should be assigned to nonstandard forces in theater. Until DOD issues policy guidance that clarifies (1) the roles and responsibilities for preparing and training nonstandard forces, including waiver responsibilities and procedures, and (2) the nature and extent of ground force commanders' authorities to direct the use of these forces, DOD will continue to face challenges regardless of its level of coordination.

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## Recommendation for Executive Action

To enhance the management of DOD's nonstandard forces, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) in conjunction with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop and issue a policy to guide the training and use of nonstandard forces. At a minimum, the policy should clarify

- responsibilities for the predeployment training of all nonstandard forces, including individual augmentees,
- training waiver responsibilities and procedures, and
- the nature and extent of ground force commanders' authorities to direct the use of nonstandard forces.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

The Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Readiness) provided written comments on a draft of this report. The department concurred with the recommendation, and stated it has work underway to review existing policy and ensure the necessary guidance is in place for effective training and equipping of nonstandard forces and individual augmentees. In addition, DOD provided technical comments, which we have incorporated in the report as appropriate. The department's comments are reprinted in their entirety in appendix II.

We are sending copies of this report to other appropriate congressional committees and the Secretary of Defense. We will make copies available to others upon request. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

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Should you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please contact me at (202) 512-9619 or [pickups@gao.gov](mailto:pickups@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix VI.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon L. Pickup". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sharon L. Pickup, Director  
Defense Capabilities and Management

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# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

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To assess the extent to which DOD's use of nonstandard forces to meet ground force requirements has impacted the force, we interviewed officials from the entities involved in the oversight, management, and use of nonstandard forces, including the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Chiefs of Staff Directorates for Manpower and Personnel and Operations, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), U.S. Joint Forces Command, and the service headquarters and service force providers. We discussed our methodology for identifying and defining nonstandard forces with CENTCOM, the service headquarters, and the service force providers. We then obtained data from the services on the extent to which they have relied on nonstandard forces in support of ongoing operations as well as data on the use of nonstandard forces from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and U.S. Joint Forces Command. Using these data, we determined as a baseline the extent to which the services rely on these forces to meet operational requirements and the resultant effect on operational tempo. Because nonstandard force definitions have differed over time and across the services, we were not able to assess the reliability of these data. We discussed the implications of the use of nonstandard forces on the overall force, obtaining testimonial evidence from officials (1) responsible for the management and oversight of these forces, and (2) using these forces, including, but not limited to, officials from CENTCOM; the service component commands—U.S. Air Forces Central, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, and Army Central Command; service headquarters, and service force providers. We obtained and reviewed documentation on the impact that the use of nonstandard forces has had on the services, in general, and on particular career fields within the services, such as security forces, engineering, and explosive ordnance disposal. In addition, we analyzed transcripts of congressional testimony presented by DOD officials on the reliance on nonstandard forces in support of ongoing operations.

To assess the extent to which DOD has faced challenges in managing the training and use of nonstandard forces, and taken steps to address any challenges, we reviewed and analyzed relevant sections of Title 10 of the United States Code as well as DOD, Joint Staff, combatant command, and service policies and requirements. In particular, we reviewed the principles and concepts for joint operations as outlined in Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, to include roles and responsibilities established under existing command and control relationships. We also collected and examined theater training requirements that have been established for deploying nonstandard forces, including the CENTCOM-issued, theater-specific training requirements and the tasks required by the Coalition Forces Land Component Command. We

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discussed the intent of these training requirements and the steps by which individuals and units can meet these requirements with officials from CENTCOM and the Coalition Forces Land Component Command and the Camp Buehring Udairi Range Complex in Kuwait. To determine the extent to which the services and joint community have processes in place to prepare and deploy nonstandard forces and how these processes address and allow the waiving of theater training requirements for nonstandard forces, we interviewed officials from the OSD, U.S. Joint Forces Command, CENTCOM, and service headquarters. In addition, we spoke with officials from the Navy's Fleet Forces Command, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, U.S. Army Forces Command, First U.S. Army, Third U.S. Army, Second Air Force, and Ninth Air Force. We met with officials at the Army Continental United States Replacement Center and conducted meetings and observed training at the Navy Individual Augmentee Combat Training, the Air Force Basic Combat Convoy Course, and the Common Battlefield Airman Training-Bridge course. We also observed several relevant conferences, including the Second Air Force-hosted Training and Equipment Review Boards in September 2007 and January 2008, and the Joint Sourced Training and Oversight conference hosted by U.S. Joint Forces Command in April 2008. At these conferences, we held discussions with officials to fully understand the issues and challenges associated with the reliance on nonstandard forces. To determine the procedures in place to oversee the use of nonstandard forces while deployed, we reviewed joint doctrine and service policies and spoke with U.S. Air Forces Central officials, Air Expeditionary Group commanders, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command officials, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Combined Task Force commanders, and CENTCOM officials.

To gain insight on servicemember perspectives on deploying as part of a nonstandard force, we conducted semi-structured discussion group sessions with over 300 deploying, deployed, and redeploying enlisted servicemembers and officers from each service. Specifically, we traveled to the CENTCOM area of operations in November 2007 to conduct a majority of these discussion groups. In selecting individuals to speak with, we asked the service headquarters and CENTCOM service component commands to identify all servicemembers redeploying within the time frame of our visit. We then spoke with as many of the redeployers as were available while in Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain. The basic criterion used in soliciting these individuals was that they were a servicemember deployed or redeploying as part of a nonstandard force. Most of the groups of servicemembers with whom we spoke were Air Force servicemembers in the process of redeploying from Iraq. However, we also interviewed Army and Navy servicemembers deployed and redeploying, as available, to gain

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their perspectives on their deployments. Many of the servicemembers with whom we spoke had performed engineering, detainee operations, or convoy missions, which are among the largest nonstandard missions in Iraq. Topics of discussion during the sessions included notification, preparation, and training for the nonstandard deployment, and in-theater performance. Following each discussion group, we administered a short survey to each participant which solicited further information on their experience deploying as a nonstandard force. We collected 303 surveys—254 from Air Force personnel, 33 from Navy personnel, 12 from Army personnel, and 4 surveys that did not specify the member's service. The surveys covered 39 individual augmentees and 264 nonstandard unit personnel. Upon return from CENTCOM, we met with an additional 21 Army personnel redeploying from individual augmentee deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan at the Army's Continental United States Replacement Center at Fort Benning. The same process was used for these discussion groups as those previously discussed. We then met with 43 Navy personnel at the Navy's Individual Augmentee Combat Training at Fort Jackson and 15 Air Force personnel at the Air Force's Basic Combat Convoy Course at Camp Bullis deploying as part of a nonstandard force. For the discussion groups we held with deployers, we administered a discussion session, but did not follow these sessions with the survey instrument because the individuals had not yet deployed as part of a nonstandard force. Comments provided during the discussion groups cannot be projected across the entire military community because the participants were not selected using a generalizable sampling methodology. To validate information we heard in the discussion groups, we interviewed officials from the Navy and Air Force commands that oversee the deployment of nonstandard forces in the CENTCOM area of operations, service headquarters, and CENTCOM. Despite our requests, the Marine Corps did not make any servicemembers or officials available during our CENTCOM travel.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2007 through April 2008, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

# Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000


Ms. Sharon L. Pickup  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Pickup:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report, "MILITARY READINESS: Joint Policy Needed to Better Manage the Training and Use of Certain Forces to Meet Operational Demands," dated May 5, 2008 (GAO Code 351060/ GAO-08-670).

DoD appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report. Detailed comment on the GAO recommendation is enclosed.

Sincerely,

  
Joseph J. Angello, Jr.  
Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense  
Readiness

Enclosure:  
As Stated



GAO DRAFT REPORT – DATED MAY 5, 2008  
GAO CODE 351060/GAO-08-670

**“MILITARY READINESS: Joint Policy Needed to Better Manage the  
Training and Use of Certain Forces to Meet Operational Demands”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RESPONSE  
TO THE RECOMMENDATION**

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in conjunction with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop and issue a policy to guide the training and use of non-standard forces. At a minimum, the policy should clarify:

- responsibilities for the pre-deployment training of all non-standard forces, including individual augmentees;
- training waiver responsibilities and procedures; and
- the nature and extent of ground force commanders’ authorities to direct the use of non-standard forces.

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur. The Department of Defense currently has work underway to review existing policy and ensure the necessary guidance is in place for effective training and equipping of non-standard forces and individual augmentees.

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# Appendix III: Military Command and Control Relationships

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Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, describes various authorities relevant to the command and control of deployed forces. These authorities include operational control, tactical control, and administrative control. This publication does not make distinctions between the control of standard forces and the control of nonstandard forces.

- Operational control refers to the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. Operational control includes authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations and joint training necessary to accomplish missions assigned to the command. The service operational commanders that we interviewed in theater interpreted operational control as their authority to organize their assigned forces and adjust the scope of the missions of these forces. The Navy and the Air Force exercise operational control over most of their own nonstandard forces in the CENTCOM area of operations.
- Tactical control is defined as a commander's authority over assigned or attached forces or commands or military capability made available for tasking that is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements or maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish assigned missions or tasks. Tactical control, like operational control, can be exercised by commanders at or below the combatant command level and can be delegated within a command. Commanders that we interviewed for this engagement interpreted tactical control as commanders' abilities to provide the day-to-day taskings of their assigned troops, within established mission guidelines. In the CENTCOM area of operations, ground force commanders exercise tactical control over forces under their command, including nonstandard forces.
- Administrative control is the direction or exercise of authority over subordinate or other organizations with respect to administration and support including organization of service forces, control of resources and equipment, personnel management, unit logistics, individual and unit training, readiness, mobilization, demobilization, discipline, and other matters not included in the operational missions of the subordinate or other organizations. This is the authority necessary to fulfill military department statutory responsibilities for administration and support. Each of the services exercises administrative control over its own forces, including nonstandard forces, in the CENTCOM area of operations.

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# Appendix IV: Training Requirements for Nonstandard Forces Deploying to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)

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Nonstandard forces that deploy to the CENTCOM area of operation are generally subject to at least three different sets of training requirements—the combatant commander’s training tasks, the coalition forces land component commander’s training tasks, and service training tasks. CENTCOM has issued requirements for forces deploying to its area of operations, which include minimum training tasks for both units and individuals. These requirements establish a baseline of combat skill proficiency for all forces deploying to the CENTCOM area of operations. As such, they contain both individual task requirements and groups of training tasks that are tailored to distinct mission areas. Required individual tasks include force protection, law of land warfare, rules of engagement, language training briefings, weapons qualification and basic marksmanship, High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) egress assistance training, first aid, and counter-improvised explosive device training. The requirements also include unit tasks that are tailored to 24 distinct missions—including engineering units, military police companies, area support medical companies, and light-medium truck companies—and a final set of unit tasks that apply to all the units which are not included in the 24 distinct missions. The unit training requirements are organized into categories that include driver, convoy live-fire, communications, heavy weapons, troop leading procedures and military decision-making process, and combat lifesaver training tasks. The amount of training required in each category depends on the mission individual units will undertake. For example, a general aviation company requires no communications, heavy weapons, or combat lifesaver training, whereas the requirements for military police law and order detachments include tasks in each of these categories.

In addition to the CENTCOM requirements, the Coalition Forces Land Component Command, the command that directs all land forces on behalf of CENTCOM, has also developed a list of required training tasks. These tasks include antifratricide; counter-improvised explosive device level I awareness; Counter Remote Control Improvised Explosive Device Electronic Warfare System familiarity; escalation of force; test fire/confirm zero; and HMMWV egress assistance training. Most servicemembers who deploy to Iraq conduct training at the Udairi Range complex at Camp Buehring in Kuwait before they deploy to Iraq. Camp Buehring offers training on tasks required by the Coalition Forces Land Component Command. However, personnel can complete at least one of these required tasks—the HMMWV egress assistance training, which is also included in the CENTCOM training requirements—in the United States before deploying to Kuwait. In addition to the training on the Coalition Forces Land Component Command minimum tasks, Camp Buehring offers

units an opportunity to (1) gain additional practice on tasks they have already learned, (2) receive updated instruction on the latest tactics, techniques, and procedures, and (3) complete additional training tasks that unit or service leaders determine are necessary so that the unit will be able to accomplish its mission.

In addition to the CENTCOM and Coalition Forces Land Component Command requirements, deploying nonstandard forces are required to complete service-specific training requirements. Some of these service-required tasks overlap with the CENTCOM or Coalition Forces Land Component Command minimum tasks, but the services also have some unique training requirements. For example, all Army forces entering the CENTCOM area of operations must complete biometrics training, a requirement that is not included in CENTCOM's minimum requirements. Another example of a service-unique training requirement would be the Air Force requirement for individual augmentees to receive 23 hours of training on tactical field operations, such as breaking contact with the enemy and crossing danger areas.

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# Appendix V: Servicemembers' Perceptions of Preparation for Nonstandard Force Deployments

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The groups of redeploying nonstandard forces with whom we spoke generally felt prepared to perform their assigned tasks while deployed within the CENTCOM area of operations.<sup>1</sup> Many groups of nonstandard forces with whom we spoke listed combat lifesaver training as some of the most valuable training conducted in the United States prior to deployment to theater. In addition, many groups of nonstandard forces emphasized the importance of training with the outgoing unit after arrival at their mission location. For example, deploying Air Force convoy truck drivers complete a series of tasks—preferably together with the personnel they are replacing—before they assume their mission. These tasks included riding with outgoing personnel on “local missions” to deliver supplies to bases in Kuwait. In addition, personnel with whom we spoke from the Army transportation company said that senior noncommissioned officers used the opportunity in theater before beginning the mission to train junior soldiers on specific tasks, such as heavy weapons firing and training on specific vehicles, which these junior soldiers may not have had opportunities to practice operating prior to deployment.

The groups of servicemembers with whom we spoke generally noted that the training they received to prepare them for their nonstandard force deployment was not always relevant to their missions or was redundant. However, unit leaders, trainers, and service officials with whom we spoke usually had explanations for the redundant training or had taken steps to improve the training identified through feedback as less relevant. For example, several senior leaders in the units with whom we spoke noted that although they had not needed to use their weapons training during their deployments, they were glad to have completed it just in case they had needed it. The leader of one large unit also noted that while the time his personnel spent on their individual qualifications could have been shortened, the full training time was necessary to build his leadership team in a unit that was composed of personnel from numerous different commands.

The largest group of nonstandard forces with whom we spoke—airmen responsible for trucking goods from Kuwait to Iraq—generally agreed that their U.S.-based training did not fully reflect the tasks they were expected to conduct while deployed. Servicemembers noted that they received a

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<sup>1</sup>We met with nonrepresentative groups, which included more than 300 servicemembers who were redeploying from the CENTCOM area of operations. Appendix I contains additional details about these individuals.

significant amount of training on the use of “gun trucks” (armored HMMWVs with heavy weapons attached), even though the Army had taken over the convoy security mission in theater. They also said that their training time in the U.S. could have been better used to practice driving tractor trailers, since that is what they actually did in theater. Officials responsible for training these airmen indicated that they had received similar feedback, and stated that they were adjusting the Air Force training course to better reflect actual tasks performed in theater. Specifically, the course officials had requisitioned the latest model of Army truck that the Air Force nonstandard forces were driving in theater and they had tripled the number of miles driven by the airmen in these vehicles during their predeployment training.

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# Appendix VI: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

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